



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, STANISLAUS

GET TO KNOW THE BASICS ABOUT AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

What is California State University, Stanislaus doing to prepare for a possible influenza pandemic?

- Our first step is to provide a series of informational materials that we hope answers some of the most basic questions that we all have about this public health issue.
- The campus also is working with public health authorities to prepare a plan to respond should an influenza pandemic occur.
- More information will be shared as our preparation proceeds.

What is avian flu?

- Avian influenza (flu) is a group of influenza viruses that primarily affect birds. Wild birds are the natural hosts of the influenza A viruses in general and are usually unaffected by them.
- There is a version of avian flu called H5N1 that is currently in wild birds in some parts of the world that has spread extensively to domestic fowl such as chickens. In some countries outside the United States, the loss of domestic fowl to this virus has been in the millions
- Some human cases have occurred from contact with infected poultry. Persons who have extensive contact with sick poultry are at highest risk of contracting the current strain of avian flu.
- If avian influenza strains change enough to be easily spread from person to person, then it could be a source of pandemic influenza. If this should happen, the virus becomes a human influenza virus and the possibility of pandemic influenza becomes very high.
- As of May, 2006 there is no known avian flu (version H5N1) in North America.

What is pandemic flu?

- Pandemic flu is not occurring at this time, but can happen when any strain of influenza emerges to which people have little immunity.
- By definition, an influenza pandemic spreads relatively easily from person to person across the world.
- Flu pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957, and 1968. The 1918 pandemic was severe but the 1968 pandemic was relatively mild.

- A flu pandemic has the potential to greatly affect daily life due to the probability of a large number of people being ill simultaneously.

What are the symptoms of pandemic flu?

- The symptoms of pandemic flu would likely be similar initially to traditional seasonal flu and include fever, fatigue, cough and/or sore throat, headache, and muscle aches.
- With pandemic flu the symptoms may be more severe or complications more frequent.

How is pandemic flu different than regular season flu?

- Pandemic flu is not easy to predict and when it emerges there would be little natural immunity to it.
- Seasonal influenza follows a more predictable pattern of outbreaks based on influenza virus already circulating in people.
- Because of the relative predictability of seasonal flu, educated guesses can be made as to which strains of flu will continue to be active. This allows vaccines to be made in advance of each flu season.
- Flu vaccines traditionally take about 9 months to make from start to finish.

Can pandemic influenza be prevented?

- Much work is in progress to monitor or prevent the emergence of pandemic flu.
- Additional work is being done on all levels to prepare for pandemic flu if it is not preventable.
- No one knows when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it could be.
- Preparation has the potential to reduce the impact a flu pandemic might have.

When will pandemic flu happen?

- No one is sure if the current strain of avian flu in some parts of the world will lead to a pandemic.
- Theoretically a pandemic could come soon or not for several decades.

What can I do to prepare for pandemic flu?

- The first step towards individual preparation is to learn more about pandemic flu.

- Personal hygiene measures, such as good hand cleaning, can reduce potential virus exposure.
- In the event of a pandemic there may be other advice or direction you will receive related to reducing the chance of spreading infection by monitoring for symptoms and encouraging people ill with flu symptoms to stay home from work or school.

If a pandemic develops, what treatment would be available?

- Specific anti-viral medications may be effective if a pandemic occurs.
- Plans are underway to increase the manufacture and national stockpiling of increased amounts of flu-specific medications.
- Individual stockpiling of anti-viral medication is not recommended.
- Vaccine specific for a pandemic strain would not likely be immediately available although efforts are underway to shorten the time it takes to produce flu vaccine.

Where can I find out more about avian and pandemic influenza?

Avian flu information from the Center for Disease Control (CDC)

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/gen-info/facts.htm>

Pandemic flu information from the CDC

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/general/>

US Department of Health and Human Services

<http://www.hhs.gov/pandemicflu/>

World Health Organization

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/en/index.html

Stanislaus County

<http://www.schsa.org/PublicHealth/asp/bPage.aspx?PAGEID=20&PAGE=../html/avianPandemic/index.html>